



## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO **MANAGER'S REPORT**

DATE ISSUED: June 25, 2003 REPORT NO. 03-138

ATTENTION: Rules Committee, Agenda of July 2, 2003

SUBJECT: Streamlining the Community Input Process for Park Development Projects (City-Wide)

REFERENCE: Budget Work Group Report on the Park and Recreation Department, April 2002

### SUMMARY

#### Issues:

1. Should the Rules Committee endorse the proposed administrative changes structuring the community input process for park development projects as outlined in this report? and,
2. Should the Rules Committee approve the proposed Council Policy standardizing the community notification and community input processes for park development projects?

#### Manager's Recommendations:

1. Recommend endorsement of the proposed administrative changes structuring the community input process for park development projects as outlined in this report. and,
2. Recommend approval of the proposed Council Policy standardizing the community notification and input processes for park development projects.

Other Recommendations: On November 21, 2002, this item was presented to the Park and Recreation Board for review and approval. The Board supported the administrative changes and recommended development of a Council Policy to implement the elements outlined in this report.

The proposed recommendations were also presented to each of the community park-based area committees for input (Central, Coastal, Northern, and Southern). Comments from each

of these groups were presented to the Park and Recreation Board and incorporated into the recommendations in this report.

Fiscal Impact: - Staff has estimated that the proposed changes would result in the elimination of from three to five meetings with a time-savings of three to five months per project. A review of the typical tasks required for each meeting indicates that each meeting results in direct project cost of approximately \$3,000, including the associated staff, consultant and administration fees. The proposed administrative changes and policy implementation would result in an overall direct project cost savings of \$9,000 to \$15,000, and a time savings of three to five months. In addition, project cost savings will be realized by having the construction occur earlier, thereby, avoiding potential increases due to inflation and regulatory changes. It is estimated that construction costs are increasing at a rate of 2% to 5% per year for inflation alone. Noting that each project manager is responsible for approximately 20 projects, the cumulative impact of additional meetings has repercussions on staffing levels and performance on all park development projects.

## BACKGROUND

The Park and Recreation Department is blessed with community members who are very supportive of our efforts to expand and improve the City's quality of parks. However, over the last several years, the process of gathering community input has become very time-consuming and has contributed to delays. In April 2002, the Park and Recreation Department was studied by a Budget Work Group which was chaired by Council member Scott Peters and included Council members Toni Atkins and Jim Madaffer. The Budget Work Group found that "the current process by which new parks are designed, developed and built is too slow, expensive, and fraught with uncertainty in timelines and administrative costs, which may discourage private investments in City parks." In addition, the "current community input process provides valuable input, but has evolved into a process that is often time-consuming, staff intensive, and results in fewer dollars ultimately available for public park improvements." The Budget Work Group recommended formalization of a Council Policy that "should provide for a balance of community review dependent on project scope, with the ultimate goal to expedite project timelines and increase funds available for hard costs, with an offset reduction in soft costs. This process should also encourage private investment and sponsorship by decreasing uncertainty in costs related to the administration of park development."

In the summer and fall of 2002, the Park and Recreation Department sought community input regarding streamlining the community input process for park development projects. The department met twice with each of the community park-based area committees (Central, Coastal, Northern, and Southern) to discuss the Budget Work Group findings and recommendation. Additionally, the Department invited recreation councils to a meeting to receive their feedback. Invitations were also sent to all (approximately 950) local members of the American Society of Landscape Architects and American Institute of Architects to gather their input. At each of the meetings, participants were asked to make recommendations as to how the community input process could be streamlined and improved. Approximately sixty people attended the various

sessions. In general, the attendees agreed that the current process is unnecessarily burdensome, inefficient and needs improvement.

## DISCUSSION

Community members participate in the creation of new parks and improvements to existing parks in a variety of ways. The two primary ways are through the community planning groups and through the recreation councils. The community planning groups focus on land use decisions, park designations and the approval of Public Facilities Financing Plans. The Park and Recreation Department recreation councils focus on park development, deferred maintenance, recreation programs, scheduling, and operations issues.

Timelines for park development projects vary depending upon the scope of work, and complexity and magnitude of the improvements. Typical components of a project timeline are shown below. Note that implementation of some components may occur simultaneously.

1. Long Range Planning - Preliminary Research (scope, cost, timeline, identification of funds, grant procurement), and Coordination of community plans and capital improvements program project (3 months to 9 months)
2. Land acquisition (land purchase or condemnation (12 months to 24 months)
3. Consultant Selection (1 month to 6 months)
4. Public Participation and Outreach (3 months to 12 months)
5. Design (2 months to 6 months)
6. CEQA review and associated Technical Studies (1 month to 24 months)
7. Discretionary/ Regulatory Permits (time varies from zero months when no permits required up to 12 months)
8. Construction Documents (3 months to 12 months)
9. Advertise, Bid and Award of Construction Contract (3 months to 6 months)
10. Construction Phase (4 months to 24 months)
11. Plant Maintenance and Establishment Period prior to public opening – (3 months to 4 months)

Currently, under the Department's conventional process, a large-scale project such as a community park requiring land acquisition and construction of a recreation building, swimming pool complex, and/or multi-purpose fields, as well as other recreational amenities, takes from three to five years to complete. Smaller projects, such as joint use turf fields, tot lot upgrades and comfort stations typically take from two to three years to complete.

Streamlining efforts are underway in several departments looking at many of the various components of the process. This report focuses on streamlining the community input process for park development projects.

On an average project, staff and the consultant team conduct from eight to twelve meetings with the various advisory committees, but could include several additional meetings. Each of the meetings

requires staff coordination with the consultant team, administration time, consultant time to prepare or revise graphics, and the meeting time for staff and the appropriate consultants. A typical example of the current park community outreach and participation process is as follows:

1. Recreation Council - local community refines the project scope and works at a detailed level with the project design team to develop the park program and the General Development Plan (GDP). (3 to 5 meetings)
2. Area Committee - representatives include members from throughout the larger community, including recreation council chairpersons. Once approved by the recreation council, the GDP moves forward to the appropriate area committee. On occasion, area committees provide additional comments or recommendations beyond those of the recreation council, but it is common for the area committee to echo the recreation council's input. (1 to 2 meetings)
3. Design Review Committee - Following action by the area committee, the Design Review Committee reviews the project. Here, the project is reviewed by a panel of multi-disciplinary design professional volunteers who examine the project details and make recommendations generally of a more technical nature. (1 to 2 meetings)
4. Subcommittee for Removal of Access Barriers (SCRAB) - This committee reviews park development plans for consistency with local, state and federal standards regarding site accessibility. (1 to 2 meetings)
5. Facilities Access Review Board (FARB) - This board works in tandem with the SCRAB committee and focuses on access to facilities rather than open park areas. (1 to 2 meetings)
6. Historic Resources Board - The Historic Resources Board, and its design assistance subcommittee, focuses on the review of projects that include existing or possible local, state and federal historic sites. (2 to 4 meetings)
7. Park and Recreation Board - The Board acts as the final step and the formal approval for nearly all park development projects. (1 to 2 meetings)

With the exception of a few committees, the outline shown here reflects a series of meetings that do not occur concurrently, but rather sequentially. Since meetings are typically monthly, it is easy to see that as the number of meetings increase, the impact on the overall project schedule increases by one month per meeting.

The Park and Recreation Department analyzed the entire community input process and recommended three areas for streamlining the park development process; these include the recommendations by the Budget Work Group, the Park and Recreation Board inclusive of the public forum discussions, direction by the City Manager, and the recommendations of the Park and Recreation Department Director.

#### A. Park and Recreation Department Organizational Changes

1. Reorganize the project manager assignments by council district and operational service areas (Complete)

2. Combine all project management staff within the Park and Recreation Department. This requires the transfer of 14 employees from the Engineering and Capital Projects section of the Engineering Department to the Park and Recreation Department. (Complete as of July 1, 2003)
3. Streamline the consultant selection process by utilizing open consultant contracts for “as needed” services which will reduce the process by four to six months. (Process to be complete September 2003)
4. Investigate streamlining the design process through the use of standardized design elements, such as standard comfort station and shade structure design. (In process)
5. Streamline the design and construction of tot lot upgrades through the use of “provide and install” contracts. This reduces the preparation of construction documents and advertising and bidding processes. It is anticipated that this process will reduce the project timeline by six to twelve months. (Two pilots projects are to be constructed during FY 2004)
6. Streamline the bidding and contract award process through use of the General Requirements Contract procured by the Engineering and Capital Projects Department. (Process is in place)
7. Implement primavera in-house scheduling for all park development projects. (In process - 20% complete.)
8. Develop a standardized cost estimating program and database utilizing current bid information and tracking construction trends. (In process)
9. A comprehensive inventory of existing deficiencies city-wide with a long range strategic focus needs to be quantified and prioritized. This is proposed under the Parks System Master Plan effort recently recommended for approval by the Land Use & Housing Committee to be forwarded to the City Council for consideration within approximately one month.
10. Explore dedicated funding sources for park development projects to allow for timely and expeditious implementation. This is proposed under the Parks System Master Plan described above.

As a compliment to internal organizational changes underway, the second and third implementation areas recommended are to revise administrative procedures to reflect the community input received and to adopt the council policy which will establish a procedure for community notification and input on park development projects.

#### B. Administrative Changes Recommended

1. Clarify roles and responsibilities of each advisory committee or board to reduce duplication of efforts. This will be done by updating the by-laws for each of the advisory groups involved in the park development process.
2. Realign the four area committees (Central, Coastal, Northern, and Southern) to correspond to the new Park and Recreation Department Operating Divisions (Community Parks Division I and Community Parks Division II) to improve coordination between staff and council offices.

3. Restructure the role of area committees to focus on park policy issues rather than typical park development projects. However, complex community park development projects over one million dollars would go to the appropriate area committee for review and recommendation.
4. Enhance project manager training so that staff is well-equipped to facilitate projects through the community input process to ensure that budgets are maintained and timelines are kept.
5. Provide training for recreation council and community members to inform them of their role in the park development process
6. Create a program of typical park elements to aide in the design of neighborhood and community parks. This will focus community input on the projects goals while maintaining programming flexibility.
7. Create submittal standards for consultants to assure that community meetings will be productive and that advisory groups will have the needed information to act on projects in a timely manner.

#### C. Council Policy Components

1. Standardize the community notification process for projects to assure adequate notification of affected community members and public opportunities for input.
2. Create a standardized project review process at the recreation council level.

See attached council policy

#### CONCLUSION

The three tiered approach to streamlining the community input process outlined in this report is comprehensive and will yield an improved process. It endeavors to reach a balance between the need to keep the community involved and to meet each of the objectives outlined by the Budget Work Group, the City Manager, and the Park and Recreation Department Director. Endorsement of the proposed administrative changes and adoption of the new Council Policy will improve project efficiency, reduce administration costs and project timelines, and improve consistency and predictability for park development projects.

#### ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend endorsement of the proposed administrative changes and approval of the Council Policy regarding community notification and input for park development projects with modifications.

2. Do not recommend endorsement of the proposed administrative changes and approval of the Council Policy regarding community notification and input for park development projects.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Submitted by Ellen Oppenheim  
Park and Recreation Director

---

Approved by Bruce Herring  
Deputy City Manager

Attachment: [Proposed Council Policy](#)

AP/MM/DS